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October 28, 1996

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Mr. William F. Caton, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Notification of Permitted Ex Parte
Presentation in CS Docket No. 96-60

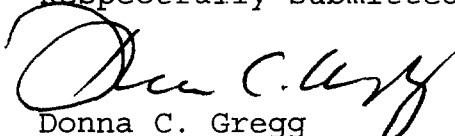
Dear Mr. Caton:

On behalf of Lifetime Television ("Lifetime"), and pursuant to Section 1.206(a)(1) of the Commission's rules, we hereby submit an original and one copy of a notification of an ex parte contact in CS Docket No. 96-60.

Nancy Alpert, Senior Vice President of Business and Legal Affairs of Lifetime and the undersigned counsel to Lifetime met with the following personnel of Cable Services Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission: Meredith Jones, Chief; William Johnson, JoAnn Lucanik, Ed Gallick, Julia Buchanan and Lynn Crakes regarding the attached materials concerning the above-referenced docket.

Kindly direct any questions regarding this matter to the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



Donna C. Gregg
Counsel for Lifetime Television

cc: Meredith Jones, William Johnson
Julia Buchanan, JoAnn Lucanik,
Ed Gallick and Lynn Crakes

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Lifetime

POSITION OF LIFETIME TELEVISION ON FCC LEASED ACCESS RATES

- Since it was established in 1984, Lifetime Television has become the premier network of "television for women." Lifetime currently reaches over 66 million households (over 90% of all cable homes) and ranked fifth among all basic cable services through June 30, 1996 in prime time and total day ratings.
- Lifetime has been acutely affected by the current shortage of cable channel capacity, losing distribution in nearly 500,000 homes in the past twelve months. Most recently, affiliation and equity deals between MSOs and new networks such as Fox News Channel have placed Lifetime, a non-vertically integrated network, at a disadvantage in the competition for channel space. An artificial boost in leased access demand through drastic rate reductions would place Lifetime in jeopardy of losing distribution in even more households.
- In view of the current channel crunch, it is not the time to make leased channels available at drastically reduced, bargain rates. Lifetime supports leased channel rates that reflect the true value of channels.
- Measures such as: (i) a phase-in, tied to the sunset of rate regulation, of reduced rates on currently occupied channels; and (ii) express recognition by the Commission that cable operators are not excused from contractual carriage obligations in order to accommodate leased access, are essential to avoid unnecessary disruption of the programming marketplace.
- Low, introductory rates, if any, should be confined to a single channel that is available only (i) to start-up channels reaching fewer than 10,000,000 subscribers; (ii) with a preference for non-vertically integrated networks; (iii) on cable systems that have at least 75 channel capacity and one or more unoccupied channels; and (iv) on systems not making other capacity available for leased access.
- To avoid unworkable "chopping up" of existing services or wasted channel space, Lifetime also supports reasonable limits on part-time leasing such as: (i) a surcharge; or (ii) a mandatory minimum lease requirement; and (iii) designation of a single part-time channel where existing carriage must be displaced to accommodate part-time use.

Permitted ex parte presentation in CS Docket No. 96-60, 10/28/96



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LIFETIME TELEVISION LANDS 11 NOMINATIONS FOR 1996 CABLEACE AWARDS

**'Television for Women' Honored with Nominations
for Best Movie or Miniseries, Best Actress and Best Supporting Actor
in a Movie or Miniseries**

"Sophie and the Moonhanger" Leads the Way with Four Nominations

NEW YORK, Sept. 10, 1996 -- LIFETIME Television begins this fall 'aces high' with 11 CableACE nominations, including acknowledgment in competitive areas such as: Best Movie or Miniseries with "Sophie and the Moonhanger," and for Best Variety Special or Series with "Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer." Game show newcomer "Debt" -- which premiered only three months ago -- was awarded a nomination for Best Game Show Special or Series.

"Almost Golden: The Jessica Savitch Story"-- to date, the most watched basic cable movie in history which received a 7.9 rating -- was nominated for Sela Ward's performance as Best Actress in a Movie or Miniseries.

"We are thrilled that the National Academy of Cable Programming continues to confirm what our viewers have known for the last year. 'Television for Women' works! Our original movies, short form programming, and public affairs campaigns continue to make that special connection with female viewers," said Doug McCormick, President and CEO of LIFETIME Television.

-- more--

In addition to the Best Movie and Best Actress in a Movie or Miniseries nominations, LIFETIME was also credited with two nominations for Best Supporting Actor in a Movie or Miniseries for Jason Bernard's work in "Sophie and the Moonhanger" and Dennis Boutsikaris in "Chasing The Dragon." The LIFETIME Original movie, "Sophie and the Moonhanger," which starred "Home Improvement's" Patricia Richardson and Lynn Whitfield ("The Josephine Baker Story"), also received nominations for Sara Flanigan and Judi Ann Mason with Best Writing For A Movie or Miniseries and John A. Martinelli for Editing of a Dramatic Special or Series/Movie or Miniseries.

In 1995, LIFETIME began its commitment to the fight against breast cancer when it inaugurated the unprecedented television special, "LIFETIME Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer," and the results were a nomination for Best Variety Special or Series and a nomination for actress/comedian Julia Sweeney's work as Best Performance in a Comedy Special.

Other nominations included: Best International Dramatic Special/Movie category for "The War Between Us" produced by Troika Films and "Trial at Fortitude Bay" produced by Atlantis Films Limited.

LIFETIME Television is dedicated to providing contemporary and informative programming for women. LIFETIME is available on more than 7,600 cable systems nationwide, serving over 64.6 million households. Learn more about LIFETIME Television on the LIFETIME Online web site at <http://www.lifetimetv.com>.

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THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF CABLE PROGRAMMING

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CABLE ACADEMY ANNOUNCES SPECIAL HONORS
Golden CableACE, Governors and Creators Awards Recognize
Lifetime Television, John S. Hendricks and Nickelodeon;
Recipients to be Honored at 18th Annual CableACE Ceremonies

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 3, 1996 — The National Academy of Cable Programming today announced the recipients of the cable industry's annual special honors awards. *Lifetime Television's Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer* is the recipient of this year's Golden CableACE Award; *Discovery Communications, Inc. Founder, Chairman and CEO John S. Hendricks* has been honored with the Governors Award; and *Nickelodeon* has been selected to receive the Creators Award.

In making the announcement, Barbara York, executive director of the Cable Academy, said, "Our special award honorees reflect cable television's leadership role in establishing a meaningful dialogue with the audience through entertainment as well as community and educational outreach."

Presentations of the Golden CableACE and the Governors Award will be made during the 18th Annual CableACE Award telecast on Saturday, November 16, exclusively on TNT, live from the historic Wilshire Theatre in Los Angeles. Presentation of the Creators Award will take place during the November 15 non-televised ceremony at the Ebell Club of Los Angeles.

Golden CableACE Award

The Golden CableACE Award is the industry's highest honor for a special project or program that distinguishes cable communications through its unique contribution to the viewing public. *Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer*, developed by Lifetime Television, reached out to all women in a massive effort to create awareness for the national effort to battle breast cancer. Lifetime committed all its resources, including 50 hours of programming during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month alone. In addition, Lifetime produced award-winning public service announcements, garnered on- and off-air support from First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Tipper Gore, fostered unique collaborations with and support for leading non-profit organizations, and initiated grass roots outreach with more than 700 cable affiliates. Lifetime's public affairs efforts have been credited with advancing the FDA's approval of the "sensor pad," a device to aid women in breast self-examination.

- more -

SPECIAL CABLEACE HONORS/Page 2

Governors Award

The Governors Award honors an individual with outstanding achievements in advancing the development of cable programming. John S. Hendricks, founder, chairman and CEO of Discovery Communications Inc. is this year's recipient in recognition of his pioneering vision and success in developing Discovery Communications and its stable of networks, including Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel and Animal Planet. In 1985, Hendricks created America's first cable network designed to provide world class documentary programming in the areas of nature, science and technology, history, human adventure and world exploration. Today, Discovery Channel now serves more than 99.5 million subscribers in 141 countries worldwide. Hendricks became the first corporate leader to receive the NEA's *Friend of Education* award for "innovations in education and technology and greatly expanding educational opportunity for children." The NEA has previously bestowed the award upon such noted figures as former President Lyndon Johnson and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Creators Award

The Creators Award honors a network or production body whose programming contributions have enriched the landscape that the cable industry offers the consumer and society at large. This year's winner, Nickelodeon, has taken a leadership role in providing a safe haven for children to watch television. Through its ability to program for kids of all ages, Nickelodeon has won the hearts -- and viewership -- of parents and children, as well as media literacy groups and other child advocacy organizations. When broadcast networks seemingly abandoned family programming for adult-oriented comedies during the early evening hours, Nickelodeon stepped in by scheduling "kid-friendly" programming from 8:00-9:00 p.m. As a result, and through its overall programming lineup, Nickelodeon continues to be one of cable's most-watched networks.

The National Academy of Cable Programming was established in 1985 by the National Cable Television Association to credit and promote excellence in television programming.



PRESS RELEASE

**"LIFETIME APPLAUDS: THE FIGHT AGAINST BREAST CANCER"
TO AIR OCTOBER 21 ON LIFETIME TELEVISION**

**GRAMMY AWARD-WINNER OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN TO HOST
STAR-STUDED PRIMETIME EVENT**

**Bryan Adams, Meredith Baxter, First Lady Hillary Clinton, Sheryl Crow,
Ellen DeGeneres, Hector Elizondo, Whoopi Goldberg, Teri Hatcher, Sharon Lawrence,
Kathy Mattea, Jane Seymour and Marsha Warfield, Among Participants**

NEW YORK, September 30, 1996 -- For the second consecutive year, LIFETIME Television will produce and broadcast a special two-hour extravaganza designed to increase breast cancer awareness. Hosted by Grammy Award-winner Olivia Newton-John, the star-studded program - called "**Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer**" - will feature some of the brightest and most original performers from film, television and music. The airdate is Monday, October 21 from 9-11:00 p.m. ET/PT.

Taped before an audience at Hollywood's Pantages Theatre (on October 13), the special will include performances by musical powerhouses Bryan Adams, All-4-One, Sheryl Crow and Kathy Mattea. Olivia Newton-John will also perform two songs from her 1994 CD "GAIA: One Woman's Journey," which chronicle her own bout with breast cancer.

In addition, compelling personal accounts and comedic sketches will be presented by such luminary actors and comedians as Meredith Baxter, Yasmine Bleeth, Kelly Curtis, Jill Eikenberry, Hector Elizondo, Linda Gray, Teri Hatcher, Sharon Lawrence, Carol Leifer, Janet Leigh, Wendy Liebman, Rebecca & Ruth Ann Lobo, Jane Seymour, Michael Tucker and Marsha Warfield. First Lady Hillary Clinton, Ellen DeGeneres and Whoopi Goldberg will appear in taped segments.

LIFETIME Online will also go behind-the-scenes of the production. People who log on to the website at <http://www.lifetime.com> at the time of the taping (October 13 at 7:30 p.m. PT) will hear an exclusive audio feed of the entire program. In addition, performers featured in the program will be available for online chats.

(more)

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"Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer"

LIFETIME Television is committing \$5 million on-air and off-air to promote National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. In addition to special programming such as **"Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer,"** the network will continue to air its award-winning 60-second program shorts, called "Perspectives," offering commentaries and features on issues affecting women, and a series of public service announcements on breast cancer awareness, self-examinations and detection.

As last year, LIFETIME has joined forces with the National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations (NABCO), the leading non-profit central resource of information about breast cancer. LIFETIME is also supporting the Susan G. Komen Foundation's *Race for the Cure*, the largest series of 5K races held in 65 cities nationwide.

Producer of **Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer** is Ken Ehrlich Productions. Executive-in-charge for LIFETIME Television is Peggy Allen.

LIFETIME Television is dedicated to provided contemporary and informative programming for women. LIFETIME is available on more than 7,600 cable systems and alternative delivery systems nationwide, serving over 66 million households. Learn more about LIFETIME Television on the Lifetime Online website at <http://www.lifetimetv.com>.

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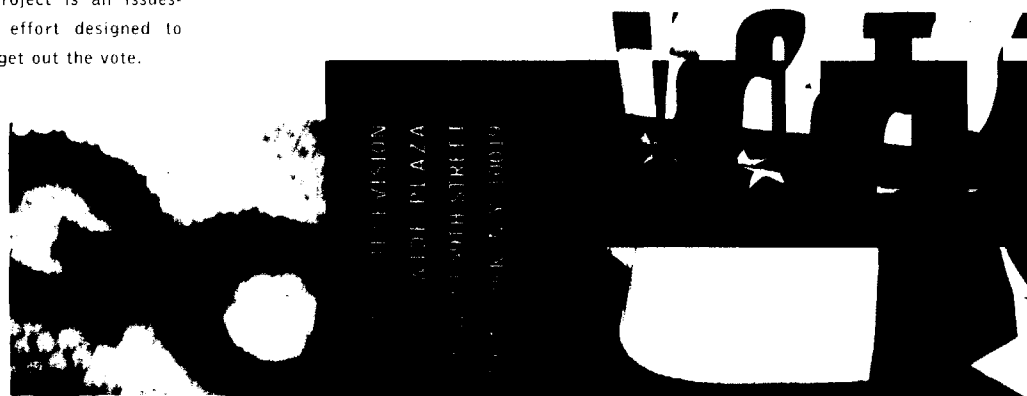
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Julie Nathanson, Rogers & Cowan, Inc., 310/201-8891

**MAKE A
DIFFERENCE
IN YOUR
LIFETIME**

Lifetime Television is available on more than 7,600 cable systems nationwide, serving over 64 million households. The Network is dedicated to providing informative and entertaining programming for women, with a program slate including: award-winning original movies, acclaimed parenting programs, the weekly "Intimate Portrait" series in which women ranging from Maya Angelou to Mary Magdalen are profiled and an array of popular lifestyle and entertainment series.

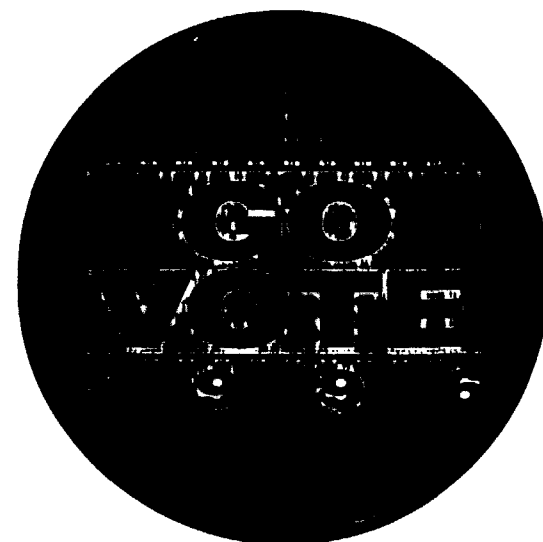
The Council of Presidents is an historic coalition of 110 non-profit, non-partisan women's organizations representing over six million women. The Council's membership includes: American Association of University Women, Association of Junior Leagues, Int., National Council of Negro Women, Child Care Action Campaign, Gray Panthers, Business and Professional Women USA, Ms. Foundation for Women, League of Women Voters, National Commission on Working Women, National Association of Women Business Owners, National Organization for Women, National Women's Political Caucus and the YWCA of the U.S.A.

The Women's Vote Project is an issues-based, non-partisan effort designed to educate women voters and get out the vote.



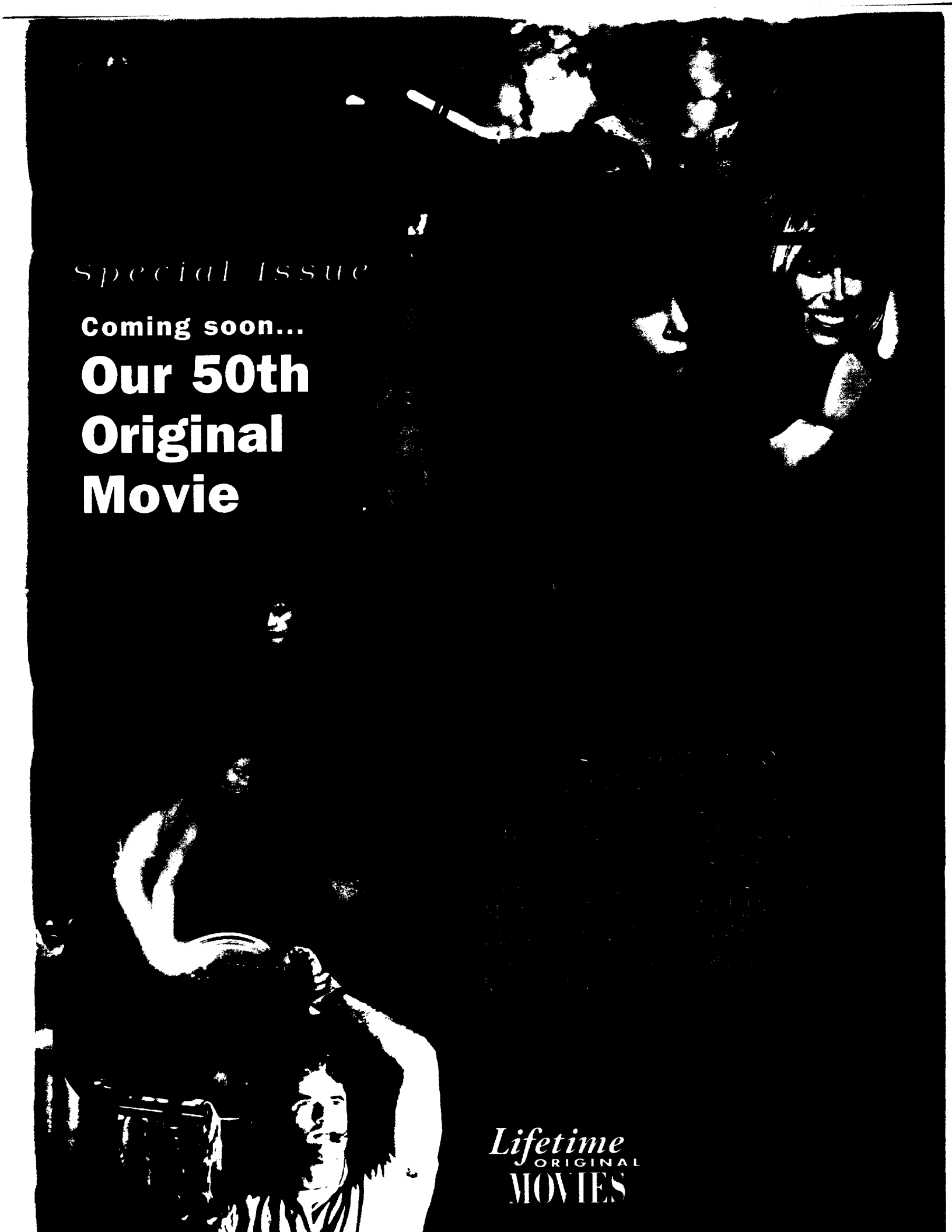
"There will never be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers."

[Susan B. Anthony]



A public service campaign from Lifetime Television and the Council of Presidents' Women's Vote Project.

Lifetime
Television for Women™



Special Issue

Coming soon...

**Our 50th
Original
Movie**

Lifetime
ORIGINAL
MOVIES

**SALUTE TO LIFETIME TELEVISION
ON ITS 50th ORIGINAL MOVIE**

A League of Their Own

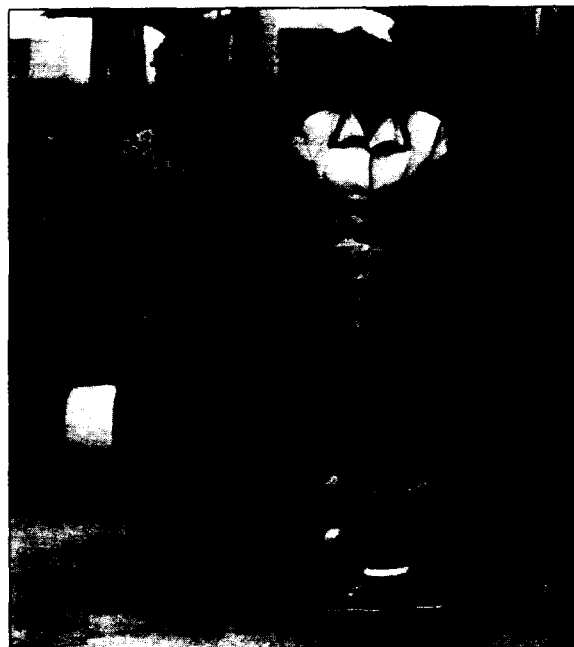
Through its programming, hiring practices and community involvement, the cable network is dedicated to serving the female population.

BY DENISE ABBOTT

Lifetime's gamble to brand itself as "Television for Women" has paid off in spades. In the three years since doing so, not only have women embraced the idea of having their own network — with viewership up more than 75% — but advertisers have come to the party with the realization that Lifetime is the place to be if they want to affect the consumer judgments made by women.

"We are 52% of the population, but it's unusual to be embraced in this way," observes Joan Hyler, an influential Hollywood manager and president of Women in Film. "Right out of the block Lifetime gets my vote. They get an A+ for having the guts to call themselves TV for women. It's brave and extraordinary."

"Our research shows that women of the '90s are exhausted and looking for a way to escape," says Geraldine Laybourne, president of Disney/ABC Cable



Lifetime's original movies feature courageous women who triumph over difficult situations: (clockwise from top) "Choices of the Heart," "Hidden in Silence," "Stolen Babies," "Sophie and the Moonhanger" and "Chasing the Dragon."

LIFETIME TELEVISION

Networks, which jointly owns Lifetime with the Hearst Corp. "Lifetime's movie strategy has been right on track. The 9 p.m. slot offers terrific story-based movies that women relate to. The network has created a real niche for itself as the only one in the entire cable universe oriented toward women."

Writer-producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason agrees: "When I'm at home and can find nothing worth watching, I know I can always go to Lifetime, and there will be a place for me to be."

Ever since Doug McCormick, president and CEO of Lifetime, took the helm in 1993, the only direction for the network has been up. Profits have doubled, and the amount of original programming being produced has increased 50%. Household ratings have increased by 32%, and the picture gets even better when you look at Lifetime original movies. The average household rating for the movies has increased 90% over the past two years. Lifetime is the No. 1 basic-cable-TV network among women 18 to 49 and is currently available on more than 7,600 cable systems nationwide, serving more than 64 millions households.

The network's advocacy of women reaches beyond the screen as well. In recent months, Lifetime has been particularly active in the fight against breast cancer; the current Go Vote '96 campaign, which aims to get women's voices heard in the upcoming elections; and in the sponsorship of women's sports.

"It's a brave gender-paving-the-way network," says Marie Wilson, president of the Ms. Foundation, who commends Lifetime for being one of the "few consistent supporters" of Take Our Daughters to Work Day. "They take women seriously as an active viewer audience. They're staying in touch with where women are and where they're going as we head into the 21st century."

What have made Lifetime a household name above all else are the quality original movies, overseen by Sheri Singer, vp movies and dramatic programming. Since heading the movie division in '93, she has turned the movies into a monthly franchise that viewers eagerly anticipate. Lifetime was a big contender in this year's prime-time Emmy competition. As the most-



"Almost Golden: The Jessica Savitch Story" was nominated for three Emmy awards this year: Outstanding Made for Television Movie; Outstanding Lead Actress in a Miniseries or Special, Sela Ward; and Outstanding Individual Achievement in Directing, Peter Werner.

watched made-for-cable movie in history, "Almost Golden: The Jessica Savitch Story" not only broke industry viewership records but garnered three Emmy nominations, which puts the new producer of original movies in the ring with veteran cable systems and the broadcast networks.

Singer also supervised the CableACE Award-nominated films "Against Her Will: The Carrie Buck Story," starring Marilu Henner and Melissa Gilbert; and "Choices of the Heart: The Margaret Sanger Story," starring Dana Delany. Other successful original movies under her direction include "Dancing in the Dark," starring Victoria Principal; "Sophie and the Moonhanger," featuring Patricia Richardson and Lynn Whitfield; and "Ebbie," starring Susan Lucci. She was also responsible for packaging Lifetime's 50th original movie which will air in January '97, "A Stranger in Paradise," the true story of a middle-class wife and mother who is found guilty of a white-collar crime after receiving bad advice. While serving her prison sentence, she witnesses male guards sexually assaulting female prisoners and uncovers a prostitution ring operated by guards using these inmates. She and her husband, a Honolulu radio-talk-show host, risk their lives to successfully expose this injustice. Ultimately, 22 guards are fired or resign and are replaced by women.

"I wasn't looking for anything in particular, but I was looking for something special for our 50th original movie," says Singer. "I felt this project could be a perfect match. In the broadest sense it fits into what Lifetime is here to do. Also, it gives us an opportunity to draw attention to a situation that hopefully will never happen again. It carries a strong relatability and resonance."

The movies vary greatly in their subject matter and tone but all are oriented toward women and the issues they want addressed. The female protagonists are typically depicted as heroines pulled by various conflicts. During the course of their story they demonstrate the toll exacted in exchange for holding firm to their beliefs. Interestingly, the films — which air five times in the first month followed by approximately 20 runs over the next four to five years — typically garner between a 30% and 35% male audience. "The orienta-

tion toward women doesn't mean men can't watch," Singer flatly states. "We're not trying to send people into different rooms."

Singer's programming is also largely responsible for Lifetime's ratings increase. In fact, the movies averaged a 3.0 household rating in the second quarter of this year — a 58% increase over the second quarter 1995 household rating average of 1.9 for original movies.

Lifetime may be television for "the gentler sex," but don't think for a minute that its mandate translates to soft-pedaling or backing away from controversy. The network risked alienating segments of its audience by depicting anchorwoman Jessica Savitch in "Almost Golden" as troubled and ambitious as she clawed her way to the top of a man's world. "That's why I took the role," says Sela Ward, who received an Emmy nomination for her portrayal. "Exploring those corners and colors was certainly the most challenging role of my career. It was an intense experience — 16-hour days of heavy, emotional stuff. I grew both as a performer and a person, that's for sure."

Lifetime also dared to go where CBS censors would not when it aired an episode of "Women in the House" that focused on violence against women in film. When CBS refused to broadcast the episode in its entirety, Lifetime not only picked it up but gave the show's award-winning creators Linda Bloodworth-Thomason and Harry Thomason an opportunity to explain to viewers their reasons for producing the provocative program. "CBS took offense to the montage at the end where we showed actual film clips of women being stabbed, raped, beaten and thrown out the window to Willie Nelson singing, 'You Always Hurt the One You

LIFETIME TELEVISION

Love." Bloodworth-Thomason recalls. "I said: 'I agree. It is offensive. Let's bring attention to it.' That's when Lifetime not only took it on but embraced and celebrated it and went to great lengths to publicize it. *Brave* is a word I don't like to use often in the industry because I think it should be reserved for situations like Vietnam. But I do, in fact, think the network was courageous in putting itself on the line."

Anecdotes abound regarding creators who have unsuccessfully shopped their projects all over town only to have them finally come to fruition at Lifetime. Jennifer Alward, one of television's most successful producers, had spent five years pedaling "Choices of the Heart: The Margaret Sanger Story," which was the story of the pioneer in family planning who changed the course of history for women everywhere. "The networks all told me: 'You know we can't touch this subject matter. It's too close to abortion,'" Alward recalls. Upon airing on Lifetime, the movie won critical acclaim, several CableACE nominations and was honored as a Distinguished Entertainment Special for the '95 Nancy Susan Reynolds Awards.

"Not only is Lifetime brave but it can be edgy as well," says Alward. "Earlier I produced what was probably their lowest-rated movie ever: 'Night Owl,' starring Jennifer Beals and a monster. It was our attempt at an effects movie with and for women. The problem was, we didn't have the money to properly do the special effects. But the point is that Lifetime was willing to try. Unlike many network executives, Sheri never looks at me like I'm crazy."

Increasingly, it's not unusual for creators with quality projects to bypass the networks altogether and head straight for Lifetime. "Most of us still work for the networks, but we take our special movies to cable," says Alward, who recently sold her third project to Lifetime. "We'll do maybe two commercial projects for the network, then one good one elsewhere. It's a shot to work on something you really believe in."

Singer agrees: "We've got a lot of people working here now who aren't interest-

ed in doing network movies because there are so many of them, and they don't feel they can get the same attention as they would here. We work really hard to send that message."

Actress Michele Lee heard the message loud and clear. "I decided Lifetime was the best place for my vehicle," says Lee, who wrote, produced, directed and stars in the upcoming "Color Me Perfect," scheduled to air on Lifetime in November. "Networks are so broad based, they want to attract every single kind of viewer. Lifetime isn't limited by that mandate and so can afford to be more forward thinking."

Lifetime is becoming a first stop for many, says manager Hyler, because, in addition to offering more than conventional movies of the week, the environment is highly creative and filmmaker oriented. "Networks are star and producer driven, but cable is becoming much more a director's medium," Hyler says. "Also the chain of command at Lifetime is streamlined. It's not product by committee. You're not endlessly waiting for commas to be changed in New York. Equally important, they support their projects with great marketing. As a manager, I don't feel my clients are going to do brilliant work only to have it fall through the cracks."

Less high profile but equally important is Lifetime's daytime programming, which falls under the domain of Peggy Allen, a former Hearst employee who was named vp produced programming and production in



Peggy Allen, vp produced programming and production (below), oversees the development of Lifetime's daytime fare, including "Our Home" (above) and "The Main Ingredient" (right).



1993. In lieu of soap operas and trash talk television, the net's daytime lineup features programming that offers insights and updates on topics that appeal to women as well as practical hands-on information that can improve their health and help them make their house a home. "Our assumption is that women who stay

home during the day are intelligent and really busy," says Allen, who considers Lifetime an excellent counterprogramming measure against "syndicated riffraff." "We try to give her pertinent information she can use," says Allen, "whether it's in the crafts arena, cooking or general home-related information."

Allen's developments for Lifetime include the daily live talk show "Queens," the Saturday-night stand-up comedy series "Girls' Night Out," the daily relationship series "The Marriage Counselor," the daily information and entertainment series "Our Home" as well as the specials "Growing Up Funny" with Brett Butler, "Christy Turlington Backstage" and "Carly Simon Live at Grand Central Station." She's particularly proud of "Women in Film's Crystal Awards," which were broadcast for the first time in the organization's 20-year history last month. The awards honor outstanding women who have helped expand the role of women within the entertainment industry. Currently, Allen is gearing up for "Lifetime Applauds: The Fight Against Breast Cancer," the second annual two-hour entertainment special that will air in October. Purchasing off-network rights to top sitcoms and one-hour dramas has also become big business at Lifetime with such program buys as "The Golden Girls" and "Homicide: Life on the Streets." The network's most recent acquisitions include 112 episodes of "Ellen," the ABC sitcom starring Ellen DeGeneres that is scheduled to join the fall lineup in 1998, and 113 episodes of "Blossom," which will be shown postsyndication in fall 1999.

In addition to offering programming for women, Lifetime's employment opportunities for females are ample. Seventy percent

LIFETIME TELEVISION

of the staff are female, and women are increasingly working their way onto the productions themselves. Of the 22 movies Singer has under her belt, 17 executive producers, 15 line producers and 13 writers have been women. "I'm conscious of hiring women crew members, but you can't legislate it," Singer concedes. "Women haven't gotten into many of the below-the-line positions yet, but when they're available, we use them as much as possible."

Directing, Singer adds, is a traditional male bastion where women have yet to make strong headway. "I'm open to women directors, but often I can't make it work," she says, adding that Michele Lee and Diane Keaton have been Lifetime's sole female-director hires to date. "There aren't nearly as many women directors as there are men. Also, the first batch of movies I ordered were mainly shot in Canada, where there are even fewer women directors. It's only recently that I've been able to open it up to consider women directors."

Not content to simply give lip service to women's concerns, Lifetime steps into the arena and wraps itself around the issues. The network was the premier sponsor of the Ms. Foundation's Make Our Daughters to Work Day. According to the Ms. Foundation's Wilson, Lifetime

president and CEO McCormick "loves to sit down and think with you. He'll ask: 'How can this be done better? How can we get more people to call the 800 number?'"

Last year, Lifetime aired a series of reports on the breast-sensor pad, a device designed to assist women detect lumps in their breast. Approval of the device was being tied up with FDA red tape. When the pad finally won the agency's approval, the manufacturer publicly thanked Lifetime for its involvement.

Most recently, Lifetime and the Council of Presidents' Women's Vote Project have collaborated on a massive public-awareness campaign — Go Vote '96 — that is designed to get women's voices heard, provide information on key election issues and inspire women to go to the polls.

"Women feel they have no voice, that no one listens. No one responds to their questions," observes TV journalist Linda Ellerbee, who hosts the campaign with "Day and Date" anchor Dana King and says she jumped at the chance to be involved in the

"immensely appealing" project, which has televised roundtable discussions as its centerpiece. "The televised debates have become so overmanaged with the same people asking the questions ... they've become boring. I've certainly had my turn at asking the questions but this time I want to be the one handing the mike to the lady in the third seat from the aisle and giving her a shot."

Based on the findings of extensive research, qualitative analysis and focus groups, the network is currently expanding in several new directions. Brian Donlon developed and recently launched a Lifetime Web site (<http://www.lifetime.com>) designed as a resource for women and the people in their lives. A combination of original and repurposed programming, the site covers fitness and nutrition, parenting and family life, relationships, women's news and entertainment. It has already received favorable reviews from the Washington

year of negotiation, he recently signed a deal to air the Women's National Basketball Association games live in primetime on Lifetime.

"Sports have become an integral part of the lives of younger women," Donlon explains. "The reasons are largely sociological. Title 9 was passed by Congress 25 years ago mandating equality in sports for girls and boys. You now have a whole segment of the population — 12- to 35-year-old females — who grew up with sports as an active part of their lives. We have to pay attention to that. We care less about scores and events, however, than about the story behind the events."

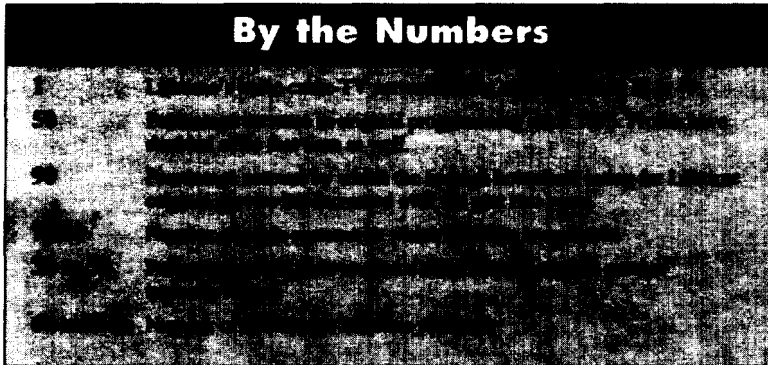
There's also a new 24-hour cable network on the drawing boards called "The Place." Its market will be young women ages 18 to 34; its content, faster-paced, hipper shows steeped in attitude. "With this programming block, we are once again making a proactive move to respond to the needs of an underserved audience," says Lifetime's McCormick. "Targeting younger women is a natural expansion of our franchise."

According to Jane Tollinger, general manager of "The Place," the programs will provide viewers with information they can retain and use that is presented in an accessible, modern style.

"On-air hosts will reflect the attitudes, interests and life-styles of viewers of 'The Place,'" she says. "The goal is for viewers to think, 'They know what I'm thinking, and they know what I care about.'"

As the 21st century approaches, all indications are that Lifetime will continue to be a leader in the highly competitive cable industry as well as a proponent in the lives of women in general. What promises to ensure the network's continued success is its ability to respond to its audience's ever-changing needs and interests. "One of the things I brought to the party when I joined ABC/Disney in February was the importance of knowing your audience deeper than just offering programming and getting reactions," says Laybourne, formerly president of Nickelodeon. "I'm amazed at how quickly and positively Lifetime has responded. They've truly got their fingers on the pulse of the female demographic. Not only are they in touch with where the '90s woman is headed, but they've also got a beat on her daughter." □

By the Numbers



Times, Cablevision Magazine and the online magazine I-TV. "Research indicates that in the next three to five years, 36% growth is expected among females going online," says Donlon, a former print and TV journalist. "We had to get into it — but not in a strictly promotional vein. Rather we wanted to get into it in a way that represents Lifetime: providing good service, good content, good information."

ABC/Disney Cable president Laybourne anticipates the Web site will ultimately develop a voice pertaining to programming. "Online is like an antenna that's out there dialoguing with Lifetime's viewership," she explains. "That input can be fed back into programming. I see the Web site as a pipeline that will help make Lifetime's voice even more relevant."

Working in conjunction with Lynn Picard, senior vp of ad sales, Donlon has also overseen the network's sports ventures with America3, the Colorado Silver Bullets, the Women's Olympic Basketball Team and Indy car driver Lynn St. James. After a

Life Lessons

Quality stories and strong female characters are the secret to Lifetime's original-movie success.

BY DENISE ABBOTT



Stories with resonance (counterclockwise from top left): Michele Lee in "Color Me Perfect" and Suzanne Somers in "Devil's Feed," both of which are on the fall slate; the Emmy nominated "Almost Golden"

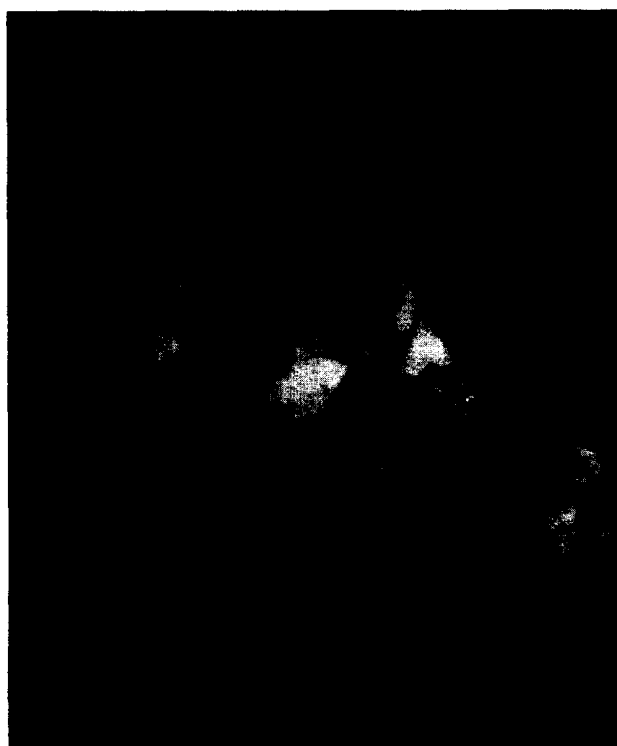
It's telling that "Almost Golden: The Jessica Savitch Story" was turned down by every network in town before landing on the desk of Sheri Singer, vp movies and dramatic series at Lifetime. "There was absolutely no interest," says Bernie Sofronski, a veteran executive producer who so believed in the project that he shopped it on and off over a four-year period. "The networks couldn't have cared less. It wasn't important or sexy enough. Sheri, however, said yes right away."

Upon greenlighting the project, Singer, the former Emmy-winning producer of "Donahue" whose track record includes stints at Walt Disney Television and Columbia Pictures Television, sat back and watched it become the highest-viewed made-for-cable movie in history as well as the recipient of three Emmy nominations.

Singer's readiness to back the true story of NBC's fallen "golden girl" helps illustrate what distinguishes Lifetime's original movies from those on other cable networks. "Our movies are always built around a strong female character," she explains. "You rarely see that on TNT, HBO or USA. The Family Channel is obviously more family oriented, while Showtime's fare is more eclectic, frequently with strong male appeal. We're interested in strong female stars with strong female appeal."

Equally important, when viewers tune their televisions to Lifetime, there is an expectation, a quality — just don't call it a message. "Message is not my favorite word," says Singer. "I try to look at it as a resonance, something viewers can take away after having watched it. Even the lighthearted ones — and we do two or three of those a year — have to be about something."

Lifetime is also not afraid to deal honestly with its subject matter, whether it's violence against women, a fertility scandal or the portrayal of a true-life character. Sofronski, for instance, characterizes as courageous



ORIGINAL PROGRAMMING

the network's decision to depict the Jessica Savitch character, played by Emmy nominee Sela Ward, as dark and difficult. "Most executives are afraid of the audience losing sympathy with the lead," says Sofronski, who also executive produced last year's Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation "Harvest of Fire" — the highest-rated two-hour movie of the year. "In [the Michelle Pfeiffer film] 'Up Close and Personal,' for example, they totally chickened out. But what happens is the colors get brought down until there's nothing left. I'm confident I couldn't have gone as far as I did had I not been at Lifetime."

Since joining Lifetime in 1994, Singer has established the original movies as a monthly franchise. "Before I took over there were three to six movies a year, but you never knew when they'd be on," she recalls. "Some were terrific, and others were right at the bottom. One of the things I wanted to implement, in addition to a monthly franchise, was consistency in terms of quality. It's no secret that some movies do better than others. But I'll feel better about a low-rated movie I think was really well made than I would about one I knew wasn't good that did well."

The quality of the movies has helped put Lifetime on the map. Not only do they get the most resources from the network — financing, publicity, promotion, stars — but they've also established a strong identity in the entertainment community. "Those who review the movies or agents who are considering them for clients always remember the last tape I sent," says Singer. "It's much easier for me to interest talent — before and behind the camera — than when I first got here."

"I always treat Lifetime projects seriously," says ICM's Sylvia Gold, whose clients Victoria Principal and Susan Lucci have starred in Lifetime movies. "In fact, everyone at ICM handles them importantly. The material is always first-class, the productions are superb, and the promotion is excellent."

"Susan Lucci got to play a female Ebenezer Scrooge," Gold continues. "That's what makes Lifetime so excellent."

Michele Lee is another case in point. She is the first woman to serve as writer, executive producer, director and star of a Lifetime original movie. The project,



Sheri Singer
vp movies and dramatic series

scheduled to air in November, is "Color Me Perfect," the story of a woman with limited intelligence who undergoes a ground-breaking genetic experiment that turns her into a genius but with questionable results. "I knew Lifetime was the best place for my vehicle," says Lee, who has previously directed episodic television and produces all her own movies for television. "It's an

'When people look at the broadcast networks, there's a certain sameness to the material.

I feel I can't afford to do that.'

— Sheri Singer

intimate film that speaks volumes about things. It's a small story about a big idea, the sort of program one used to see on Hallmark Hall of Fame. I knew Lifetime would give it the attention it deserves."

Though it's Singer's job "to make things look easy," coming up with a dozen high-quality movies a year is no slam dunk. "To get 12 movies you have to develop about 24 scripts," says Singer, who refuses to buy projects she thinks have only a marginal chance of seeing the screen. "As a former producer, I know networks develop things four-to-one. I'd go in and sell a project knowing I had — at most — a 30% hope of getting it made. I feel it's important for people to know they have a 50% chance of success if not better. It makes up for a lot if you think you're going to get your project made."

When greenlighting projects, Singer

looks for a variety of subjects and genres. "When people look at the broadcast networks, there's a certain sameness to the material," says Singer. "I feel I can't afford to do that. If I'm not offering my audience a wide variety of stories and issues, I'll lose them."

On the fall-winter lineup, in addition to "Color Me Perfect," are "Devil's Food," starring Suzanne Somers and Dabney Coleman, a black comedy about a TV news anchor who sells her soul to the devil to be thin; "Desperate Justice," starring Faith Ford and Kyle Secor, about a runaway mother and daughter who find sanctuary in an underground railroad for mothers and their abused children; "Santa and Me," with Shelley Long, Eddie Albert and Barry Bostwick, about recapturing the magic of Christmas; and what will be Lifetime's 50th original movie, the Stephanie Zimbalist project "A Stranger in Paradise," about an inmate who uncovers and exposes a prison prostitution ring operated by guards.

A hands-on executive who sees herself as "the producer's partner," Singer is involved in everything from hiring and scouting locations to budgeting and editing. "People in the creative community tend to get nervous about hands-on executives," Lee concedes. "They worry it's going to stifle the creative process, and it usually does. My experience with Sheri was great, however. She had no hesitation or fear when it

came to dealing with me in all my aspects. Her expectations are very high, and she lets everyone know where they stand. She forced me to keep searching for answers that I know served to enhance the project. I honestly feel if more people were like Sheri, the world would be a better place."

In addition to managing a slateful of movies, Singer is developing Lifetime's first dramatic one-hour program for next year. A number of ideas are on the table, she says, but nothing is definitive. In the interim, she'll continue doing what she does best. "What I love about Lifetime is that it's big enough to do things that matter and have people know about it. But it's small enough to allow me to have an impact and a lot of responsibility," says Singer. "To be able to make the decisions on creative aspects of pictures — you can't put a price on it." □

Q & A

Doug McCormick

The man behind 'Television for Women' speaks his mind.

Since Doug McCormick became president and CEO of Lifetime Entertainment Services just three years ago, profits have doubled and viewership has increased more than 75%. These dramatic rises are the direct result of his bold decision to label the network as "Television for Women" and to combine that with an aggressive slate of original programming.

The native New Yorker earned a bachelor's degree in speech and communications from the University of Dayton and a master's in business from Columbia University. A former songwriter, McCormick's tunes have been recorded by Paul Anka, Gladys Knight and Dusty Springfield.

McCormick is a 25-year TV-industry veteran who has been with Lifetime in various positions since its inception in 1984. Writer **Denise Abbott** for **The Hollywood Reporter** caught up with the man behind the women's network.

The Hollywood Reporter: What was the state of affairs at Lifetime when you assumed the presidency?

Doug McCormick: The network was targeting women but had never come forth and branded itself. I thought we could be far more meaningful in terms of "Television for Women" and that we could get a lot more viewers. I was the first guy to come out of the closet and put "Television for Women" on the stationery.

THR: Was this strategy a gamble?

McCormick: I definitely went out on a limb. We risked having women not wanting to watch TV for women and men turning off completely. But I didn't call it "Television for Women" right away. I first developed the programming: original movies, intimate portraits. We invested tens of millions into this until there was a certain cachet, a patina to the network. We also launched Take Our Daughters to Work Day for the Ms. Foundation. We developed a track record through which we earned the privilege to brand ourselves.

THR: How long did that take?

McCormick: About a year and a half. The other big hook was positioning the network. It had a schizophrenic existence when I took



over. It was Lifetime Monday through Saturday. On Sunday it was Lifetime Medical Television. I had to figure out how to transition out of that business in order to have a channel fully dedicated to women.

THR: How soon did you realize your strategy had paid off?

McCormick: The ratings went up almost instantly [because] we're in tune with the social issues women want addressed. It's a combination of good programming instincts and a fine execution. Furthermore, many of the auto and finance companies were starting to respond to the growing economic power of women. We gave them a natural location for their spots.

THR: What criteria must Lifetime programming meet?

McCormick: Except for the purely escapist stuff designed to let viewers just kick back and have a good time, we hold to a higher standard that forwards women's issues. We're never demeaning to women. You'll never find 900-advertising or psychic-friends-type stuff on Lifetime. Over the past several years we've lost well over \$100 million in revenue for refusing to accept that kind of advertising. It would dampen our image. Lifetime is the sum of its parts, high quality by design.

THR: Are you ever surpassed by your audience?

McCormick: Often. That's why I have to trust the people I hire. One example was the Carly Simon special. I like her, but I had no idea of the cachet it would bring to the network until I went to Grand Central Station

the day of the concert. Standing backstage looking out at the audience I could see the women swaying and clapping and the men sitting there like stone. This was truly a women's performance. She did tremendous ratings among women 18 to 49 — the highest we've ever done on an original show.

THR: What career opportunities are offered for women at the network?

McCormick: Seventy percent of the work force is female. The rest are gender-challenged, recovering males. We'll never be exclusively female, however. We want a world that has a Donna Karan and a Calvin Klein.

THR: Were you raised with a sensitivity to women's concerns, or is it an awareness you developed as a result of the job?

McCormick: As a kid, I was a big guy but had a heart condition, so I couldn't play sports. The best way to get recognition was via music. I played guitar and piano, performed in school plays and bands and ended up making a career out of it. Being a musician instead of a sports jock made it easier for me to figure out, not so much women's concerns, but human concerns. I had less to lose when it came to trying to make the world a better place.

THR: What is the biggest challenge for Lifetime in the future?

McCormick: Businesswise, the challenge is launching the second network. It's tricky because we've got to draw a demographic that does not watch Lifetime in huge numbers. The average Lifetime viewer is 39 years old and has 2.3 children. We'll have to promote the block heavily via off-air vehicles in order to attract large numbers of younger women.

We're way behind on an international Lifetime. I think there's tremendous international fascination with the molding of young people that translates to an instant market abroad.

As far as programming, the challenge is to be able to pinpoint the needs of the women's audience ... to be clear that we are TV for women and yet be able to address the needs of a very ubiquitous 52% of the population. The challenge is to make sure we're supplying something for everybody. □

Sister Service

Testing the programming waters with a new, younger-skewing spin-off, Lifetime launches 'The Place.'

BY DENISE ABBOTT

The M in MTV is for *men*," says Doug McCormick, Lifetime president and CEO, referring to such testosterone-laden MTV staples as "Beavis and Butt-head," "The Grind" and "Singed Out." "Young women have no place to go, no place to call their own."

That will soon change. In January 1997, the cable network plans to debut "The Place," four half hours of original programming geared toward the nation's 32 million 18- to 34-year-old women. "There's a whole culture out there that's unique unto itself," says McCormick. "The publishing world is already wise to this: You've got Marie Claire, Redbook and YM."

Overseeing the challenge are Jane Tollinger, general manager for the new block and a 12-year veteran of the network, and Susie Arnett, programming head and a former segment producer of MTV's "House of Style." "Lifetime can't be all things to all women at one time," says Tollinger, who has spent the past year developing "The Place." "The new network will reflect the voice, attitude, life-style and interests of young women today. I think of it as Lifetime's little sister."

The challenge, says Tollinger, is to capitalize on Lifetime's success while giving the network within a network its own identity. "It will be more informal and less predictable than Lifetime," she says. "It will be contemporary but not too hip — because that's exclusionary — smart but not overly intellectual. Basically we're reclaiming the color pink and saying it's cool to be a girl. Young women can be passionate about lip-

stick and health care."

Setting the pace are two new shows geared more toward information than entertainment. "The Word," structured like a women's magazine, features quick cuts to short segments on travel, fashion and health. "The Dish" is a weekly review of pop culture — movies, books, trends — from the perspective of young women.

Rounding out the block are two additional shows currently in development: One deals with relationships from a woman's point of view; for the other, men offer their two cents on everything from competition to commitment. The shows are tentatively scheduled to air Fridays from 6 to 8 p.m. — before young women have gone out for the evening — and will lead into the WNBA games in June.

If advertisers like the idea, Lifetime next year will spin off "The Place" into a full-fledged cable network, Lifetime Too. Additional pilots on music, astrology and health have already been shot. To hear the principals talk, it sounds like a no-lose situation. According to Tollinger: "We've done tremendous amounts of research and know that advertisers feel women 18 to 34 are a tremendously underserved audience because they're so scattered. If you can bring them all to one place, that's good for business. Also, by the year 2000 the population of women 50-plus will grow by 20%, [but] advertisers are still very big on entry-point marketing — gaining customer loyalty when they're young."

The push to reach young women comes as marketers slice their demographic targets



Tracie Ross is the host of "The Dish," one of four half hours of programming on "The Place."

even thinner. That strategy worked for sports network ESPN, which launched ESPN2 for a younger, hipper male audience, and for music-video network MTV, whose VH-1 network targets slightly older viewers who are still rock fans.

Sitting on Lifetime's board and a proponent of the new-network plan is Geraldine Laybourne, president of Disney/ABC Cable Networks, which owns one half of Lifetime. "This makes great business sense," says Laybourne. "Women are the biggest purchasers in general, and young women define the brand loyalty-brand selection process, but there hasn't been any special network targeting this age group and gender."

Laybourne adds that Lifetime's increased ratings and financial results paved the way to begin the process of launching its second network. "They have earned the right to explore," she says. "Just look at their performance over the last two years."

Though the new network will be geared toward young females, Lifetime chief McCormick expects plenty of women of a certain age to be tuning in as well. "No one experiences themselves as 40 or 45," he says. "No matter how old you are, you think you're 35. I anticipate a lot of peekaboo viewing. Everyone's a voyeur when it comes to wanting to know what's going on with the younger generation." □